

Pam-Africa
Congo

A VISIT TO OUR AFRICA MISSION*

By Stephen J. Corey.

THE OREGON INDISPENSABLE.

During the whole of my eight weeks' visit to the Congo work the steamer *Oregon* was always headquarters, and, with the exception of a few nights at Bolenge and a few more during itinerates in the forest, the close of each busy day found me seeking my night's rest on board this effective little battleship of the King. All told, I traveled about 2,200 miles on the *Oregon*. There are four comfortable cabins on the steamer, and during all these weeks mine was the one dedicated to the memory of Dr. Harry Biddle and furnished by his wife and brothers. It is hardly necessary to say that the sacred memory of this consecrated pioneer, who gave his life for the Congo, was a constant source of inspiration to me. His life and service were brief, and he did not even have the opportunity of seeing Bolenge, after its purchase; nevertheless his sacrifice for the Congo

* This visit was made during the summer of 1912.

that he loved was not in vain. Only God can measure what it has meant to the work.

A mission steamer is indispensable to our Congo work. To conduct our present work without it would be like evangelizing the Mississippi Valley with only canoes on the rivers and forest paths overland as avenues of communication, with the necessity of transporting most of the living supplies and much of the material for buildings from St. Louis as a base. Each of the other missions on the Upper Congo have their steamers: the Presbyterians, the American Baptists, the Congo Bololo Mission; and the English Baptists have two. The Catholics have a number of steamers.

THE STEAMER A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION.

The *Oregon* is a religious institution. You are awakened at five in the morning by the bell which calls the crew to morning worship. A few minutes afterward the steamer resounds with a hymn sung in the Lunkundo tongue, and then follows prayer by the captain or one of the crew. With the exception of the captain, who is a missionary, the steamer men are all natives. There are three wheelmen (the strain is heavy on these men, and they must work by relay), two engineers, two firemen, four anchormen, one watchman, and about fifteen workmen to cut wood and load it, besides loading cargo and helping push the steamer off sandbanks, if she is so unfortunate as to strike them. Then there is

the cook and table boy, making a force, all told, of about thirty men. This is quite a company, but fortunately American wages are not required by Congo native workmen. The wheelmen and engineers receive from \$75 to \$125 each per year, as they are skilled men, while the rest of the crew average about \$25 per year. All the native men furnish their own food. The headmen and nearly all of the crew are Christians. The unconverted ones are usually soon led to accept Christ by their zealous companions.

GREAT WELCOME AT BOLENGE.

The *Oregon* met me at Stanley Pool, 250 miles from the mouth of the Congo, and it took us eight days to make the 500 miles up river to Bolenge. We reached Bolenge about ten in the morning of July 5th, and a great welcome awaited us. Fully one thousand people were gathered on the slope of the high beach, and as we drew near we could hear them singing as with one voice, "Bringing in the Sheaves." Mr. and Mrs. Hensey and Miss Eck were in the midst of the people waiting to welcome us.

BEAUTIFUL AND BUSY BOLENGE.

Mrs. Dye fitly described Bolenge in her book by that title when she called it "Busy and Beautiful Bolenge." It is certainly both. The prettiest spot on all the Congo, as far as I saw it, is this, our first

station. Green grass everywhere, and the whole station set in a bower of palms, mangoes, and orange trees. Neatly outlined little streets run through the station grounds. These are kept nicely swept each day by the schoolboys. These same boys also keep the grass well cut.

At Bolenge we have three missionary family homes, a single woman's home, a dispensary, a printing office, a store building, and the large new church to be used partly for the Bible College. It is a well-equipped station and only needs a good hospital and dormitories for the Bible College to make it complete. Mr. and Mrs. Hensey and Miss Eck were trying nobly to look after all the work of the station. Mr. and Mrs. E. R. Moon, who were home on furlough in 1912, have since returned to Bolenge, and with them Miss Apperson. We should have a physician at Bolenge, and one man should devote his whole time to the Bible College. Thus two more families are needed most urgently. It has not been possible to complete the Bible College because of the fact that there has been no one to take charge of this work.

THE STATION AT HIGH TIDE.

I remained about a week at Bolenge, and the experiences of those busy, happy days will never be forgotten. It was the time of the quarterly incoming of evangelists, visiting Christians from a distance, and candidates for baptism. Bolenge has

about seventy-five evangelists of her own, who preach in villages covering the larger Bolenge district. These men brought with them groups of Christians and inquirers. There were present between seven and eight hundred of these visitors. On Sunday two hundred and nine were baptized in the Congo. There were one thousand, two hundred and forty-seven at Sunday-school, and over one thousand at communion. A great Endeavor service was held on Friday night, with eight hundred members in attendance. Many of these people had come a distance of from three to five days through the forest. The thank-offering in our money amounted to nearly \$100. It would be hard to compute the real value of such an offering to these people. It is doubtful if the average income of all the people contributing would amount to more than twenty-five cents a week. Of course, this was Bolenge at high tide. The local membership of the church is about three hundred, and the Sunday-school about the same. As yet it seems wise to keep the membership of the little groups of disciples in the distant villages of Bolenge District with the Bolenge congregation. The missionaries show rare skill in the management of this large district. It would be impossible for them to bear the burden if it were not for the great help of a fine church board of officers at Bolenge and a group of strong evangelists in the field.

From Bolenge the *Oregon* took us up the Busira River to Longa, near the mouth of the Momboyo.

LONGA, A STATION CUT FROM THE JUNGLE.

At Longa another hearty welcome awaited us, from Mr. and Mrs. Eldred and the Longa church. This is a new station, but good progress has been made, both in the church membership and the station equipment. Mr. Eldred has a unique feature in the work at Longa in the way of a school for the study of the French language. This is very important, as French is the official language of the Congo, used by State officers and traders alike. The congregation was lined up on the beach to meet us, singing a gospel hymn; and as the steamer swung in they gave us the military salute, and then a long salutation in French in perfect unison. Here again was the hearty handshaking and the enthusiastic welcome.

Much must be done from a physical standpoint to develop a mission station in the heart of Africa. A few brief years ago the spot where Longa Station now stands was a dense forest jungle. To fully appreciate what that means, one has but to attempt to penetrate one but a few yards. The growth is well-nigh impenetrable.

In planting a station, all of this must be cleared, and then the ground laid out in careful order. Longa is now a beautiful spot, as pretty as Bolenge in many respects, although it lacks as yet the stately and matured beauty of the older station, where palms,

mangoes, and other trees have been growing for many years. We must remember that Bolenge was laid out and planted by another mission more than twenty years ago. Through the untiring work of Ray Eldred and Dr. Jaggard two brick houses have been erected at Longa, besides a brick store and medicine house. For these the bricks were all burned on the station, and there are sufficient of these now on hand to go far towards the construction of a hospital. A good mud-wall, thatched-roof church has also been constructed, which serves as well for the day school. These are the incidental things already accomplished, aside from the regular missionary work. Longa is a very important station. It is on the great Busira, near the mouth of the Momboyo. Up this last river seventy-five miles is Lotumbe; up the Busira something more than one hundred miles is Monieka; seventy-five miles downstream on the Congo, below the Busira's mouth, is Bolenge. So you see Longa is the hub in our wheel. It is a difficult field, owing to the fact that the Catholics are quite strong and oppose our work bitterly, and also because the church at Longa has never been able to get much of a constituency from the native village of Longa itself. But in the back country there is a strong work, and Brother Eldred has recently opened up a very promising out-station work up the Bolingo River, sixty miles to the north. The great need at Longa is *more missionaries*. (Since writing this Mrs. Eldred has gone home to her re-

ward, and Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Johnston have gone to Longa.)

We had a most refreshing visit at Longa. Sixteen were baptized on Sunday, and others are awaiting baptism up the Bolingo River. The church was well filled with a reverent congregation at all the services. An excellent day school is being conducted in Lunkundo besides the school in French mentioned above. Mr. Eldred is conducting much industrial work. He did much pioneer work at Bologne and in that district before going to Longa.

From Longa the steamer took us up the Momboyo River to Lotumbe.

A LARGE CHURCH AFTER TWO YEARS.

Two years ago the Lotumbe site was granted to us by the government. Less than two years ago Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who had been on the Congo but a few months, went alone to take charge of the work. The church now has over four hundred members. We baptized sixty-seven on the Sunday spent at Lotumbe, then seventeen more the following Sunday up the high Momboyo, and Brothers Smith, Hobgood, and Holder baptized forty-four more up the Lokolo River a week later. All of these in the Lotumbe field, making 124 baptisms for that church during my stay. Mr. and Mrs. Smith and a large crowd met the steamer at the beach. Again our hands and arms were made lame by the enthusiastic handshaking. There are one hundred boys in the

Lotumbe day school. These were lined up on each side of the path, and after we had all marched through between them and under an arch displaying a motto of welcome, they joined in singing, "Cling to the Bible." Then they all repeated a large part of Mark 14 in concert, and afterwards a boy of sixteen gave quite a remarkable address of welcome in the Lunkundo tongue. One is astonished at what has been done here in a little more than eighteen months. A large tract of land has been cleared from the dense jungle, and a mud-and-thatch church, carpenter-shop, and various other small buildings erected, besides the construction of an excellent mission home. This latter was largely done by Mr. C. P. Hedges. The few days and the Sunday spent at Lotumbe were cheering indeed. It hardly seems possible that in so brief a time so large a church, giving every evidence of reverence and solidity, could be built up. Many of the candidates who were baptized during our visit came from a long distance. Seven men who had heard of the teaching in a vague way through others, walked and canoed ten days from the far headwaters of the Lokolo River to be taught more perfectly and baptized. The two new missionaries, Mr. Hobgood and Mr. Holder, remain at Lotumbe to hold the work, while Mr. and Mrs. Smith come home for a much-needed furlough.

EXPLORING THE HIGH MOMBOYO RIVER.

After spending some time in conference over the problems of the work and in planning for the future, we embarked on the *Oregon* for a week's journey up the high Momboyo. Already evangelists had gone into this far region, and reports had come that there were people awaiting baptism. We steamed over one hundred miles up this swift river, through the great forest to Iyete, where evangelists had gone a year before. There we found a large village, a populous back country, and many people deeply interested in the gospel. I shall never forget the great joy of the two lonely evangelists of this far region as they welcomed us. They indeed "leapt for joy." On Saturday, while Mr. Smith and the others were examining the candidates and planning for the work at Iyete, Mr. Eldred and I marched through the forest about twenty-five miles on a trip of missionary exploration. We found a large population, well-constructed villages, and a very hospitable and kindly people. The people had never seen a white teacher before, and to the most of them the gospel was entirely unknown, yet they welcomed us and asked for teachers. We returned to the Momboyo about ten miles above Iyete on Sunday morning, and the paddlers who had come to meet us took us down in a canoe to the *Oregon* again, which we reached in time to baptize the seventeen waiting candidates. These were the first baptisms in this great new dis-

trict, and the communion service held under the trees near the *Oregon* was also a revelation to the people. One of the reasons for our journey was to look out a new place for a future station. The field is great and ready for the harvest. Somewhere near here we must have a station some day. God grant it may be soon! For hundreds of miles farther up this river there are multitudes of people who have never heard the faintest whisper of the gospel.

THE MONIEKA WELCOME.

After returning to Lotumbe for a day, we journeyed back to Longa, and then steamed up the Busira a day and a half to Monieka, our newest and most wonderful station. Dr. and Mrs. Jaggard accompanied us to be the first missionaries for these people. A great welcome awaited us. Timothy Iso, our strongest evangelist, has had charge of this work for two years. It is less than four years since the first work was done there by our people. After we had baptized the 160 waiting candidates, this new church had over six hundred members on its roll.

A GREAT WORK IN A GREAT VILLAGE.

Monieka is one of the largest villages I saw in Africa, and is only separated by a mile or so from another town almost as large, called Longa. Monieka has been a famous town for its warlike people and chief, and not until five years ago was the State

able to collect tax from these people. Indeed, it was the furious fight and defeat of a State officer and his solicitors by this town that attracted our missionaries to it. From the beginning the old chief and his people have been friendly to our work. The Monieka people are militant and enthusiastic in their Christianity. I shall never forget the wonderful welcome accorded Dr. and Mrs. Jaggard and the rest of us as the *Oregon* landed at the beach. The mud church is one hundred feet long, and was packed and overflowing at the Sunday services, and the people sit much closer together in Africa than in America. They have a wonderful way of sitting at an edge-wise angle and packing in like sardines in a box.

SPYING OUT NEW COUNTRY.

From Monieka we went on the *Oregon* up the high Busira River about 150 miles beyond Monieka to spy out the land for evangelistic work and a possible future station. This was an entirely new field, far beyond where the teaching had ever gone. The farther we traveled the greater native population we discovered. A marvelous field is open to our people far up this river, even a week's journey by steamer beyond the point we reached. Everywhere we went the teaching was welcome. In one large village on the river bank where we stopped to teach, the crowd of people and the five assembled chiefs all begged that teachers be sent at once. The chiefs said that they would at once begin to build a house and chapel

for the teacher. I shall never forget the sight of that company of heathen people standing on the bank as our steamer pulled away, calling after us for a teacher as far as we could hear.

We found a great untouched region for a new station some day, and without doubt a field where the history of Monieka could be repeated. The people are the most decidedly heathen of any we saw, but friendly and willing to hear the teaching. On beyond this point the *Oregon* can go five or six days up the Busira, and then a small boat can go many days further, and still be within the territory of the Lunkundo-speaking tribe. We are the only people who can reach these needy natives.

DOWN RIVER AGAIN.

After this journey we returned with the *Oregon* to Monieka, where we spent a second wonderful Sunday, and then left Dr. and Mrs. Jaggard in their little mud house to take up that great work. The *Oregon* then steamed down the river to Longa. Twenty-five miles from Longa, Ray Eldred met us with two dugout canoes and native paddlers, and took me up the little Bolingo River with the intention of visiting an important outpost far up this stream and baptizing some waiting candidates. After a day's paddling through the great forest, we reluctantly abandoned the trip because of low water and the multitude of fallen trees barring our progress. Brother Eldred opened up this Bolingo work about

a year ago and stationed evangelists among these people. Already the work shows great promise, and there have been a number of baptisms. Paddling down the Bolingo and Busira on our return journey, we joined the *Oregon* at Longa again, and then pursued our way to Bolenge.

IN THE MOBANGA COUNTRY.

We left Bolenge on August 20th, and, coming down the Congo fifty miles to the mouth of the Ubanga River, we steamed a day's journey up this great Congo tributary to visit an outpost and study the field. Our evangelist and school-teacher at the town of Bobanga received us with much joy. There is a group of twenty Christians in this town, and we have more evangelists and Christians farther up in the interior of the Mobanga country. Here we have another great field which is entirely unoccupied. The Ubanga is about the size of the Missouri, and for its entire course, from far East, where it rises, a few miles from the Nile, to its mouth, there is not a Protestant missionary and no teachers save our own little group near the river's mouth. (Since writing this there have been nearly 100 baptisms in this region.)

GOOD-BYE TO CONGO.

From the Ubanga we steamed down the Congo to Stanley Pool, and on August 30th I bade good-bye to the *Oregon* and its crew, including Captain

and Mrs. Hensey and Miss Eck, and took the train to Matadi, to catch my steamer home.

Thus I have but briefly sketched the visit to Congo and my eight weeks with the steamer *Oregon*. It was no easy task to say good-bye to the missionaries as I parted from them at the various stations, and finally left the little group of three on the *Oregon*. They had made my journey so delightful and had planned in so many thoughtful ways to help me to study the people, the field, and the stations. The fellowship had been very sweet, and I had seen so much of their noble work, and shared so in their joys and problems that to say good-bye was almost like saying farewell to a work of my own. However, I think the keenest pang I felt was on saying farewell to the faithful native crew of the *Oregon*. I will no doubt see the missionaries again, for they are of my own land and race, but it is not probable that I shall see again those faithful black faces that became so dear to me during the eight weeks on the *Oregon*. I can hear their distant shout of farewell yet, as I turned to wave at them when far up the beach under the African palms.

OUR MISSIONARIES IN AFRICA.

BOLENGE.

A. F. Hensey.

Mrs. A. F. Hensey.

E. R. Moon.

Mrs. E. R. Moon.

*R. S. Wilson.

*Mrs. R. S. Wilson.

Miss Edna V. Eck.

Miss Edith L. Apperson.

Dr. W. H. Frymire.

Miss Edith Apperson.

LONGA.

R. Ray Eldred.

Mr. E. A. Johnston.

Mrs. E. A. Johnston.

LOTUMBE.

Herbert Smith.

Mrs. Herbert Smith.

C. P. Hedges.

Mrs. C. P. Hedges.

H. C. Hobgood.

MONIEKA.

Dr. L. F. Jaggard.

Mrs. L. F. Jaggard.

W. R. Holder.

* At home on "sick" leave.

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